

Steele Brothers Dairies
Cabrillo Highway
Pescadero vicinity
San Mateo County
California

HABS No.

CA-2129

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

STEELE BROTHERS DAIRIES

HABS No. CA-2129

- Location: Cabrillo Highway 14 miles south of Pescadero, Pescadero vicinity, San Mateo County, California.
- Present Owner: Theodore Charr, 195 King Street, Honolulu, Hawaii--Cascade Ranch.
- Significance: The Steele Brothers founded one of the earliest and largest dairy businesses in the county, comprised of several ranches and homesteads.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: The Cascade Ranch Dairy Building (CA-2129A) was the first building at this site, built in 1862. The Cascade Ranch House (Rensselaer Steele House) (B) was built next, also in 1862. The Cloverdale Ranch Barn (C) was built in 1863. The house at that ranch, the Ramsey-Steel House (D), dates from 1873. The Ano Nuevo Ranch House (Horace Steele House) (F) was built in 1895. Other barns and houses date from the late nineteenth century.
2. Architects, builders: Isaac Steele, one of the Steele Brothers, was an accomplished carpenter who had worked on the Great Lakes as a ship's carpenter. His carpentry tools are in the Pacific House Museum in Monterey. He was probably responsible for much of the design and construction of these ranches.
3. Original plans and construction: Sketch plans for the Cascade Ranch House (E) are located in the Isaac Steele collection at the Bender Library, Stanford University.
4. Alterations and additions: A rear wing was added in 1884 to the Cascade Ranch House (B). Other additions to the rear and sides and substantial alterations such as the removal of original balconies, windows, and clapboards were made at a later date. Picture windows have been added to the gable ends.

B. Historical Context:

Rensselaer E. Steele was born November 6, 1808, in Cherry Valley, New York. He came to California in 1855 and joined with his cousins, three brothers, to form Steele Brothers Dairies. He settled first in Marin County, then moved to Santa Cruz.

By 1862, the Steeles had become prosperous dairy ranchers. They leased 17,000 acres of Rancho Punto de Ano Nuevo from Loren Coburn, and then bought that portion lying south of Gazos Creek for \$6 an acre. Eleven hundred head of cattle were bought at an average of \$15 per head, and Indian laborers were brought down from Point Reyes to work on the new ranch.

Within the Rancho Punto de Ano Nuevo several Steele ranches were established, including the Cascade Ranch for Rensselaer Steele. The Cloverdale Ranch was owned briefly by William F. Ramsey, who built the Ramsey-Steele House (D) in 1873. The Dickerman Barn was built for Isaac Steele's daughter Effie and her husband, Edwin Dickerman. The Ano Nuevo Ranch House was built in 1895 for Horace Steele, son of Isaac Steele.

Rensselaer Steele remained on his ranch until his death in 1886. The Cascade Ranch was the last of the Steele ranches to give up dairying.

Prepared by: R. Patrick Christopher
Project Historian
Historic American Buildings Survey
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PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. Cascade Ranch Dairy Building: Wood frame with clapboards, two-and-a-half stories, gable roof, brick chimneys.
- B. Cascade Ranch House (Rensselaer Steele House): Wood frame with clapboards, two stories, five-bay front, gable roof with cornice returns on gable ends, porch on three sides with balustrade on second level and box columns at first level.
- C. Cloverdale Ranch Barn: Wood frame with vertical planks, pegged mortise-and-tenon construction, gable roof, three aisles wide.
- D. Ramsey-Steele House: Wood frame with channeled siding, one-and-a-half stories, L-plan, gable roof with cornice returns on gable ends, quoining effected with channeled siding, one bay window.
- E. Dickerman Barn: Wood frame with vertical planks, mortise-and-tenon construction, gable roof.
- F. Ano Nuevo Ranch House (Horace Steele House): Wood frame with channeled siding, three-bay front, two stories, gable roof with cornice returns on gable ends, saltbox-style slope to rear, one bay window.
- G. Barn: Wood frame with vertical siding, gable roof.
- H. House: Wood frame with channeled siding, one story, five-bay front, gable roof, paneled door now boarded, end bay has garage-type opening.
- I. House: Wood frame with channeled siding, three-bay front, one-and-a-half stories, gable roof, paneled wood door.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Deed Books found in the Spanishtown Historical Society, Half Moon Bay, California and San Mateo County Recorder's Office, Hall of Records, Redwood City, California.

Steele Collection, Bender Library, Stanford University, California.

Dairy Museum and Education Foundation, Sacramento, California.

B. Old Views:

Lithograph in Moore and DePue.

C. Secondary Sources:

Evans, Albert S. A La California: Sketches of Life in the Golden State, San Francisco, 1873.

Moore and DePue. Illustrated History of San Mateo County, San Francisco, 1878.

Regnery, Dorothy F. An Enduring Heritage, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976.

Stanger, Frank. South From San Francisco, San Mateo County Historical Association, 1963.

D. Interview:

Mrs. Catherine Steele, Palomar Hotel, Santa Cruz, California.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was sponsored jointly by the National Park Service and the Junior League of Palo Alto. Recorded under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1974 at the Historic American Buildings Survey field office at the Latham-Hopkins Gatehouse, Menlo Park, California. Project supervisor was Kim Spurgeon (Assistant professor of Architecture, Kansas State University); the project historian was R. Patrick Christopher (Columbia University); and the student architects were Stephen Farneth (Carnegie Mellon University), Robert Randall (University of Houston), Aino Vieira da Rosa (University of Oregon), and Amy Weinstein (University of Pennsylvania). The written data were edited by Dorothy F. Regnery in San Mateo County in 1975 and by Alison K. Hoagland, HABS Historian, in February 1983.